



Logical Fallacies

What they are and how to spot them



Beverly Pearl



LOGICAL

What they are and how to spot them.



By Beverly Pearl



Le Temps H&S Times
<http://www.tempshstimes.com/>

"If you can't control your own emotions, you're forced to control other people's behavior. That's why the touchiest, most oversensitive and easily upset must not set the standard for the rest of us."

— *John Cleese on Twitter*



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Index

Index	i
Synopsis	i
Forward	i
Definition of a fallacy	i
Poem, Logical Fallacies	1
Definitions and examples of some logical fallacies	25
Citations and further reading	27
Logical Fallacies (full poem)	28

Synopsis

Danny finds an abandoned baby crow and takes care of it. The crow, now attached to Danny, follows him to school every day. The other students jokingly refer to the crow as "Danny's Dog". Logical Fallacies begin to unfold when a bully pushes Danny down. Through a variety of logically fallacious exchanges, Danny is blamed and punished for starting the fight. During a second encounter with the bully, "Danny's Dog" catches the attention of a teacher with his loud cawing, in time for her to see the lie unfold. The teacher decides to teach the children about what logical fallacies are and how to spot them.

The story is presented as a poem that shares the experiences of the fictional Grove St. School children as they learn about logical fallacies. Illustrations include speech bubbles

Forward:

The same fallacious discussion and bullying that is found in the school yard can often be found within upper management and around board room tables. It is hoped that introducing these concepts early will help contribute to the emotional intelligence of children and ultimately a more enlightened leadership in governments and organizations. If we form good strategic thought patterns earlier in life, our decisions may be more likely to be based on evidence rather than slick manipulation, bullying and personal agendas. Future managers, politicians and directors may have richer, more meaningful discussions if decisions are based on evidence.

A knowledgeable population might not be easy to gaslight if they are empowered to trust their own instincts, acknowledge nuance and think for themselves.

This book was inspired by a need for understanding of what logical fallacies are and how to spot them. While intended for use in the classroom, it is hoped the it will also be

Definition of a 'Fallacy'

"A misconception resulting from a flaw in reasoning, or a trick or illusion in thoughts that often succeeds in obfuscating facts/truth."

From: *Logical Fallacies*, <https://www.logicalfallacies.org/>



Logical Fallacies

This is how at Grove-Street school the children learned to ask, questions that would help them see the truth in any task.

Is it helpful to repeat the things that someone says or to believe what someone claims because your classmate does? Sometimes things can look one way depending on your stance, but they can look quite different if you take another glance.



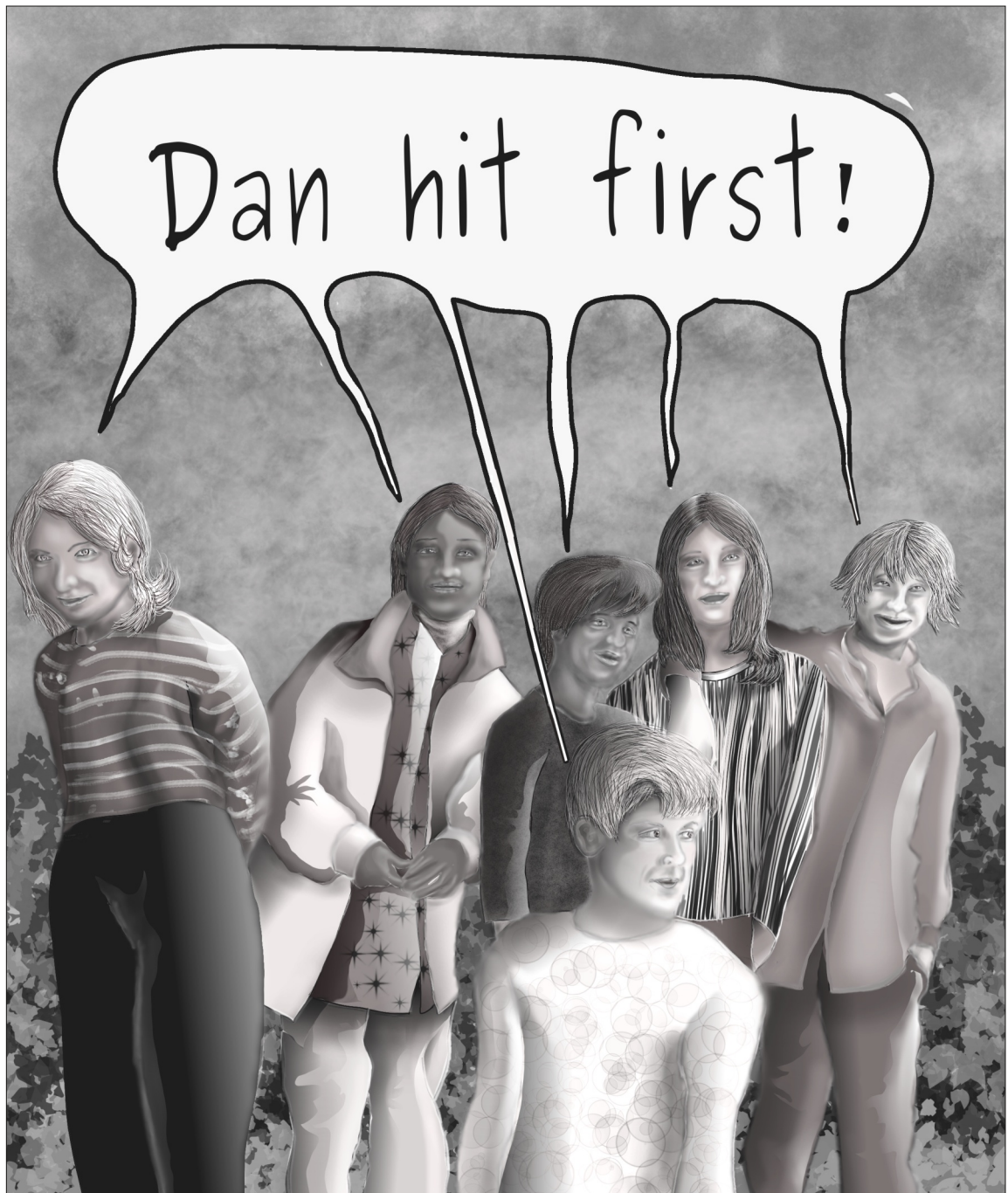


Danny found a baby crow, beneath a Grove-Street tree,
brought it in the house to feed, then to set it free.
All through summer baby grew and quickly learned to fly,
but when autumn came the crow just wouldn't say goodbye.
It followed Dan to school each day, even in the fog.
The other kids would joke around. They called it "Danny's-Dog."





Once a bully pushed our Dan, right into the muck.
"He hit first!" the bully bawled. "I could barely duck!"
Other children gathered round as Danny brushed his clothes.
"He hit first!" they chanted too. "Everybody knows!"
Caw, caw caw, said Danny's-Dog, circling above.
Then a teacher asked to know who was first to shove.





“Dan hit first.” the children said, and slowly backed away.
(Danny’s-Dog from Grove St. cawed, but really couldn’t say.)

Danny had detention, then. That was very bad.
Teacher sent a note home too, to tell his mom and dad.

Dirty clothes, accusing friends, didn’t look too good.

All believed the bully’s lie. Anybody would.





Parents lectured Danny, too. "Children shouldn't fight!"
Danny tried to tell the truth, but "Teacher must be right!"
Punishment at home was swift - grounded for a week.
Danny felt so lonely, and confused, and sad and bleak.
Next day at school the children said, "You must apologize."
Danny's-Dog cried "Caw! Caw! No!", while circling in the skies.



My kitten died. You should feel sorry for me.
Now apologize for hitting me first, or else!



Again, the bully hit our Dan. "Apologize!" they said. "and stop your stupid crow or we will shut him up instead." Bully pushed again and cried, "You must stop pushing me!"

This time, on patrol, a teacher near them got to see. Danny's-Dog made such a noise that teacher saw it all. Danny's-Dog and teacher both had seen our Danny fall.





“Danny started it!” again the angry bully cried.
“Danny started it!” said all the children at his side.
Teacher knew this wasn’t true and now there was some doubt
if the children even knew what this was all about.
“Come with me,” the teacher said. “Come, and come right now.”
“We can sort things like this out. I will show you how.”





In the classroom, teacher wrote some words upon the board.
"These are types of arguments we really can't afford:
"Appeal to people," That is one. "Authority" is two.
"These fallacies have come to mind when listening to you.
"At first the group believed a lie. Then a teacher too.
"The teacher, the authority, told parents what he knew."



Danny must be lying.
Everybody knows it's his fault.
My mother is a high school principal.
She sees these things all the time.

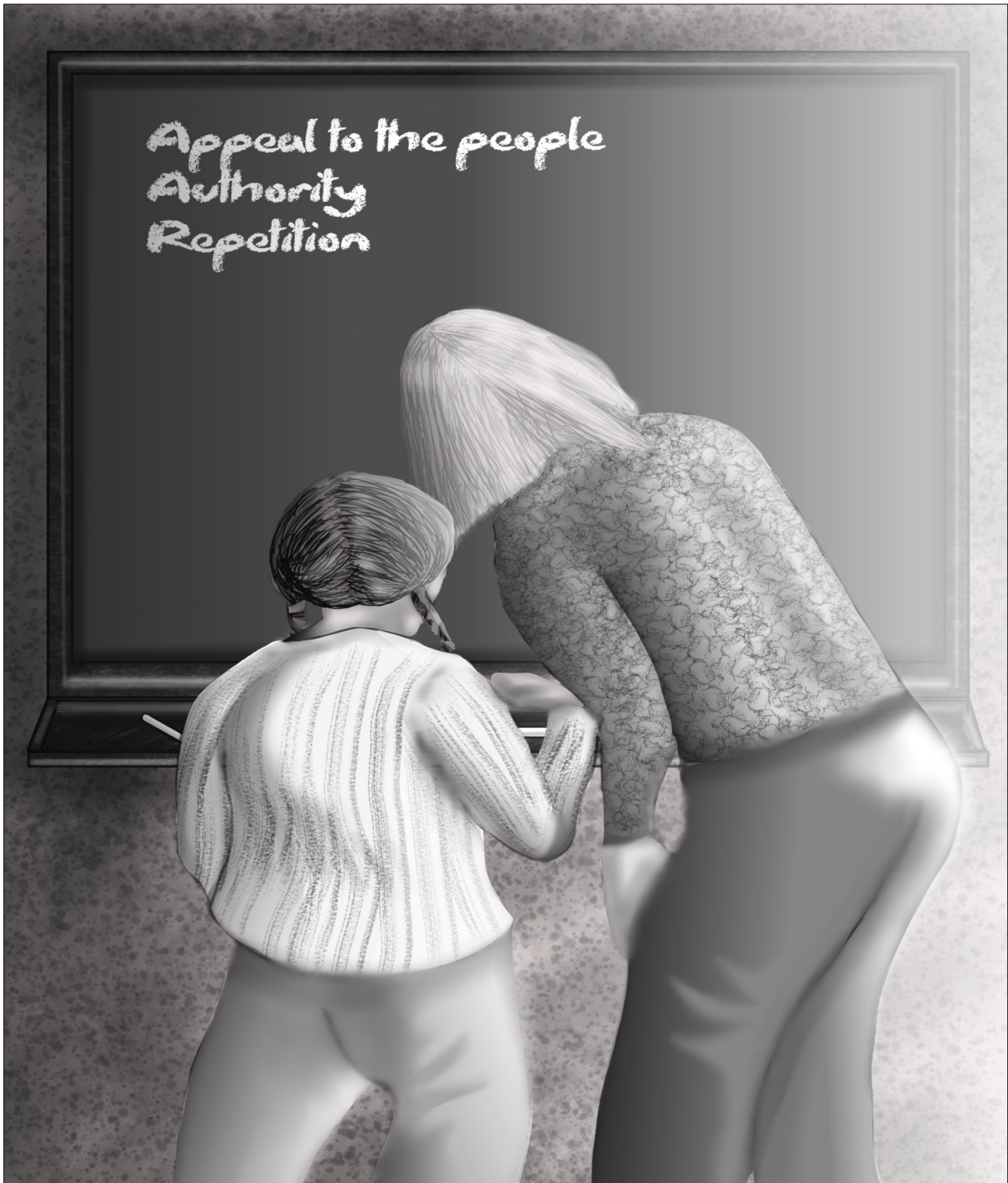
That crow scares me.

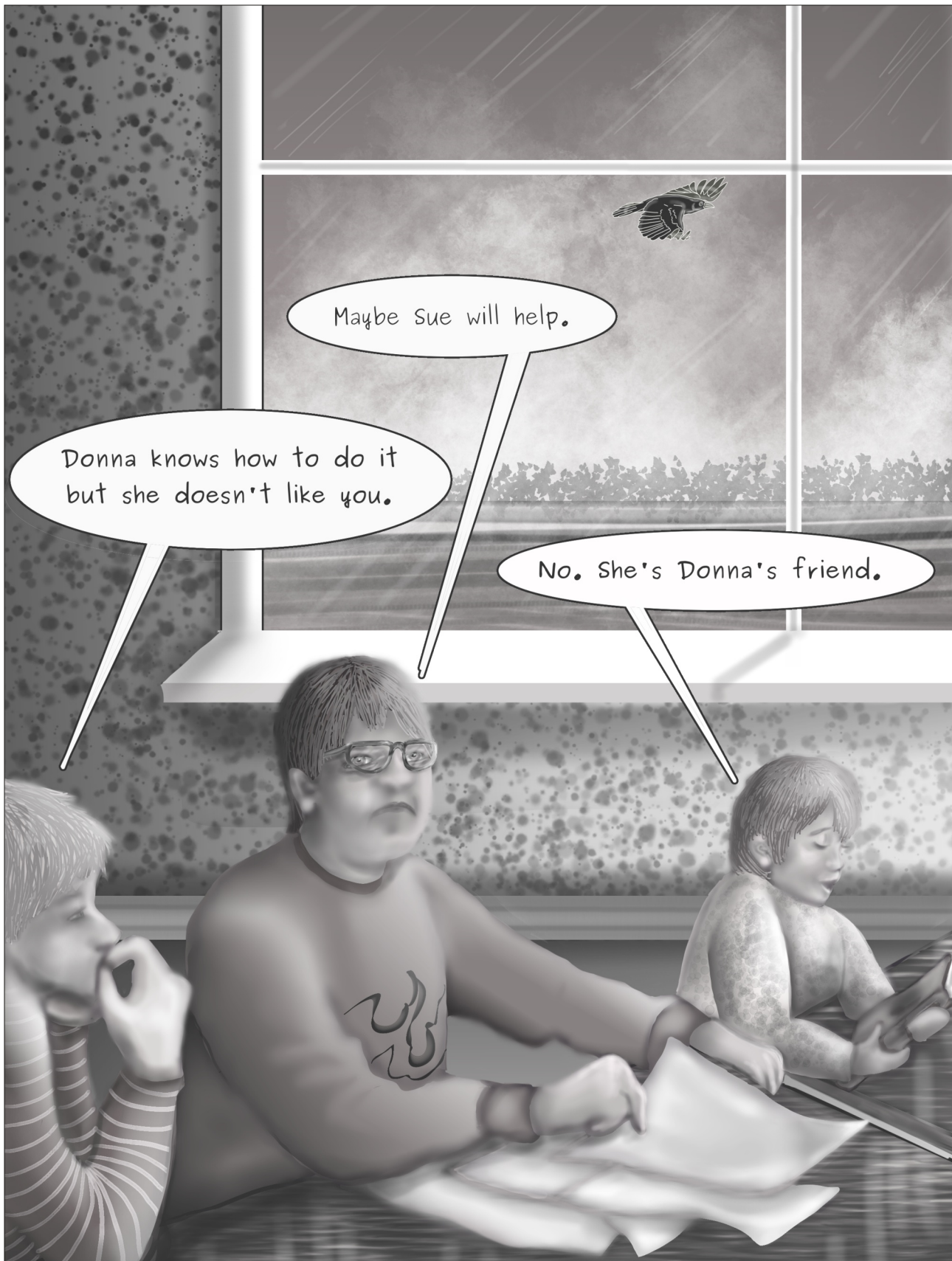
I heard something about him.
Can't tell you what it is
but it's juicy.

Look over there!



“Repetition” is another method to deceive.
Repeating blame was what had caused the students to believe.
If everyone believes a lie, that doesn’t make it true.
One teacher just accepted, though, that everybody knew.
The parents thought the teacher was the boss, and so must know.
The only ones who told the truth were Danny and his crow.





False arguments like these are often used to ill effect, and it can cause some trouble if your sources go un-checked.

Fallacies are commonplace, and these are only three.

So let's explore a couple more that now occur to me.

"Straw-man" is a claim that's made, but just to knock it down.

"False equivalence" can be enough to make you frown.



She says she has a good idea
but I hear that she lies a lot.
Do we really want to use her idea?

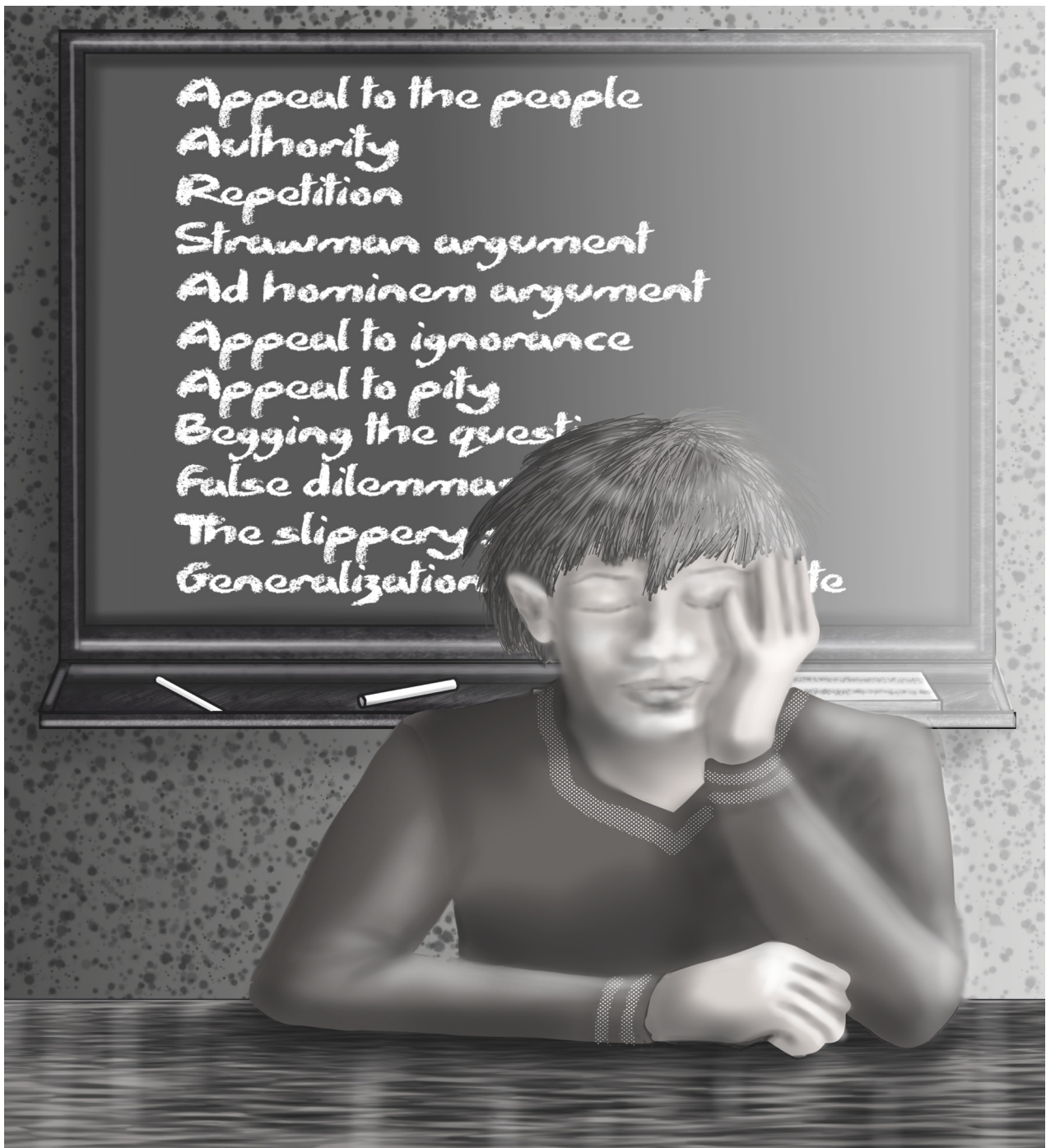
She says she has a good idea.
Why think of our own idea
if we will only use hers anyway.

Lets use one
the teacher likes.

We can use your idea or mine.
No one else has good ones.



“Ad Hominem” or “Ignorance”, “Appeal to pity” too
“Red herring” or a “The bandwagon”, are ones we should eschew.
“Cum Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc”, or “False analogy”,
“Appeal to our ignorance” is common fallacy.
“Beg the question”, “False dilemmas”, and “The slippery slope”,
And “Generalizations made in haste”, won't be used, I hope.





She is so out!
No one is talking to her.

He said it so many times
and with such confidence.
It must be true.

I will talk to her.
I bet she's nice.

I will check
some trustworthy sources
and see if they agree.

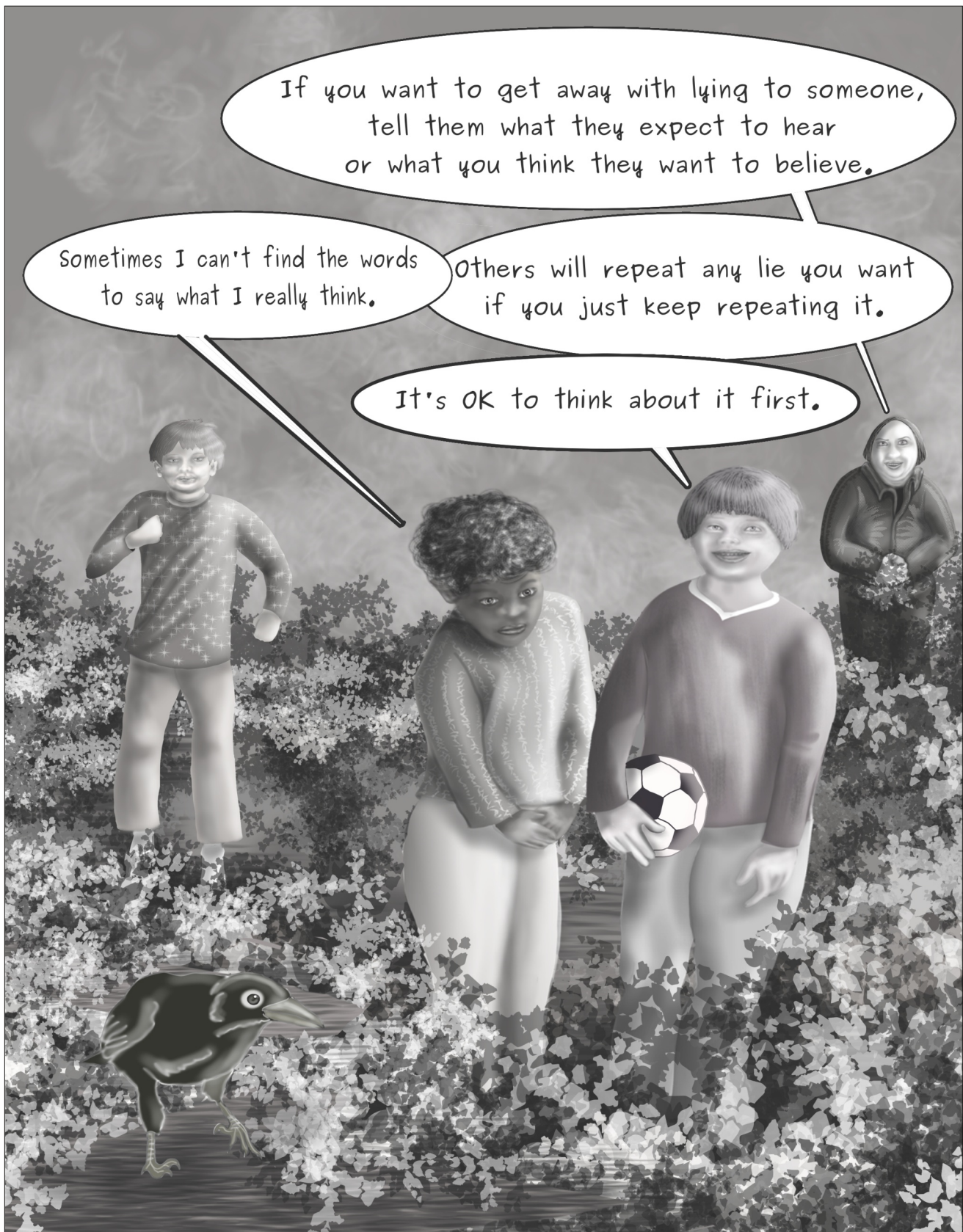
There are also many other ways to twist the truth.
Knowing them can help us each become a better sleuth.

Danny isn't bullied now, and reason is the rule.

"How to question" is a formal lesson in his school.
Now these students check their facts, avoiding mental fog.
They learned how to seek the truth, because of Danny's-Dog.

Maybe there's a better way ...





If you want to get away with lying to someone, tell them what they expect to hear or what you think they want to believe.

Sometimes I can't find the words to say what I really think.

Others will repeat any lie you want if you just keep repeating it.

It's OK to think about it first.

Definitions and Examples of Logical Fallacies

*The first example is from the school yard and an example suitable for children and youth.
The second example is set in a business environment, and refers to a more sophisticated manifestation of fallacy.*

Appeal to the People (Argumentum ad Populum): This fallacy presumes that something is true if many people believe it.

Example 1: *All the children said that Danny started the fight, so the teacher who came to investigate believed it to be true.*

Example 2: *The new manager used buzz words and phrases such as "best practises" to convince her Board that she knew best and push an agenda, though circumstances suggested a variation on that course of action might be best.*

Appeal to authority: If someone who should know what they are talking about believes something, it must be true.

Example 1: *A teacher believed that Danny started the fight, so his parents also believed it.*

Example 2: *The new manager repeatedly told everyone that he had a PhD and insisted on being called "Doctor", though the doctorate was not in medicine, in order to intimidate staff. This manager also name-dropped constantly in an attempt to validate his own arguments.*

Argument from Repetition: Repeating something is a powerful way to make people believe it, but that doesn't make it true.

Example 1: *Kids kept repeating that Danny started the fight when he didn't.*

Example 2: *The manager stated repeatedly that the whole Board had been invited in on a decision, when the Board's invitation had come too late for most to plan to attend the preliminary decision-making process. It may have made some people doubt their experience.*

Straw-man arguments: This is the misrepresentation of an argument so that it becomes easier to attack – setting up a "straw-man" in order to knock it down instead of addressing the actual argument.

Example 1: *The bully blamed Danny's crow for annoying him to deflect from his own guilt.*

Example 2: *The new manager wanted some quick successes and so made up faults to apply to the old manager, hoping to look good by comparison. Then she told everyone that her actions had brought new openness to the organization.*

Ad hominem argument: An ad hominem attack takes place when the arguer tries to undermine an argument using personal attacks.

Example 1: *Danny says he didn't do it but students think he is a liar, so they can't trust his word.*

Example 2: *The new manager said that a certain employee was the old manager's favourite, and so should not have been promoted. Then she proceeded to demote many employees who didn't agree with her agenda.*

Appeal to Ignorance: Appeal to Ignorance states that a statement must be true if it cannot be proven false.

Example 1: *We couldn't figure out why the air moved when there was no window open, so it must have been a ghost.*

Example 2: *The new manager couldn't find a report and decided that it must have been an employee's fault.*

Definitions and Examples of Logical Fallacies

Appeal to pity: A claim is made based on emotion rather than logic.

Example 1: *The bully told Danny that their kitten died before demanding an apology. The possible death of a kitten has nothing to do with whether or not Danny should apologize for something he hasn't done.*

Example 2: *The manager gained the sympathy of an employee prior to trying to make a point by saying, "Someone in my family died recently." The intended "point" was that this manager was better than the one being replaced.*

Begging the question: Begging the question is when an argument's premise assumes a conclusion.

Example 1: *One would be begging the question if one said, "So, Danny, when you hit the bully how does it feel?"*

Example 2: *The new manager asked staff, "How will we fix this organization now that the old manager has been replaced?", implying that the organization needed fixing.*

The False Dilemma: This fallacy presents complex issues in simple, opposing terms. It assumes that there can be only two outcomes. Usually one of the outcomes is better than the other, which encourages one to select the better one despite its fallacious roots.

Example 1: *Danny is given a choice between being punished for something he hasn't done or apologizing for something he hasn't done.*

Example 2: *The new manager gave the board two choices, neither of which was necessarily the best choice and both of which promoted the manager's hidden agenda.*

The slippery slope: Slippery slope arguments reason that thing A will lead to thing B and so should be avoided.

Example 1: *If we let Danny's crow follow him to school, it might fly up to the roof where it could eventually get caught in a ventilation fan.*

Example 2: *If the employees know about this plan they might oppose it. Then they would talk to each other and eventually go on strike. The strike could shut down the plant.*

Generalizations made in haste: This fallacy is about jumping to conclusions without any evidence to support a claim.

Example 1: *Everyone said that Danny started the fight, though no one had seen it happen.*

Example 2: *The manager decided that some employees were working against him, even though there was no proof of this, and fired the employees.*

Proof by Verbosity: Also called argumentum verbosium or proof by intimidation, this argument is too complicated and verbose for the listener to address the contents.

Example 1: *"A corvus* can't possibly understand the nuance of human altercation, which obfuscates our conclusions about the whole encounter." *crow*

Example 2: *Having put most of the employees to sleep with a long dissertation, the manager said, "As your new manager and the most qualified to ascertain the outcome of our planning session, and having conversed with all levels of the organization and considered all the options, it is clear we should accept option A."*

Definitions and Examples of Logical Fallacies

Red Herring: The red herring focuses on an irrelevant topic so as to distract the listener, either to deflect or to focus on a subject that the speaker knows well.

Example 1 : *"Maybe I did push Danny first, but his stupid crow annoys me."*

Example 2: *"As your new manager I have had to fire many employees, but what was I supposed to do? They disagreed with me."*

Cum Hoc, ergo propter hoc: *This is Latin for "with this, therefore because of this." It is sometimes described as correlation vs causation. It suggests that two things happening at the same time have a causal relationship.*

Example 1: *Danny's crow cawed when the bully was pushing Dan, therefore the crow must have caused the bully to push Dan.*

Example 2: *When the employees were away for the weekend, ice built up on the roof. The absence of employees in the building must have caused a build-up of ice.*

"One of the first things you learn in any statistics class is that correlation doesn't imply causation. Nonetheless, it's fun to consider the causal relationships one could infer from these correlations."
~~ Ky Harlin, (when referring to bizarre correlations.)¹

Gaslighting: *"A form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or group, making them question their own memory, perception, or judgement."* ~~ Wikipedia²

Example 1: *Everyone who told Danny that he was lying when he said he did not start the fight was gaslighting him.*

Example 2: *The new manager insisted that the whole board had a chance to participate in an important decision, when in reality she had once quickly shown only some them an invitation to one of the discussions. She then proceeded to hire a friend at great expense to the organization, all the while telling the board that they had participated in that decision too.*

Citations

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If any of these links are dead, a saved copy can be retrieved from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine at: <https://web.archive.org/>

¹. Harlin, Ky, Director of Data Science. "The 10 Most Bizarre Correlations." *Buzzfeed*. 11 April 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/kjh2110/the-10-most-bizarre-correlations>

². "Gaslighting." *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaslighting>

Logical Fallacies *(full poem)*

This is how at Grove-Street school the children learned to ask,
questions that would help them see the truth in any task.
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or to believe what someone claims because your classmate does?
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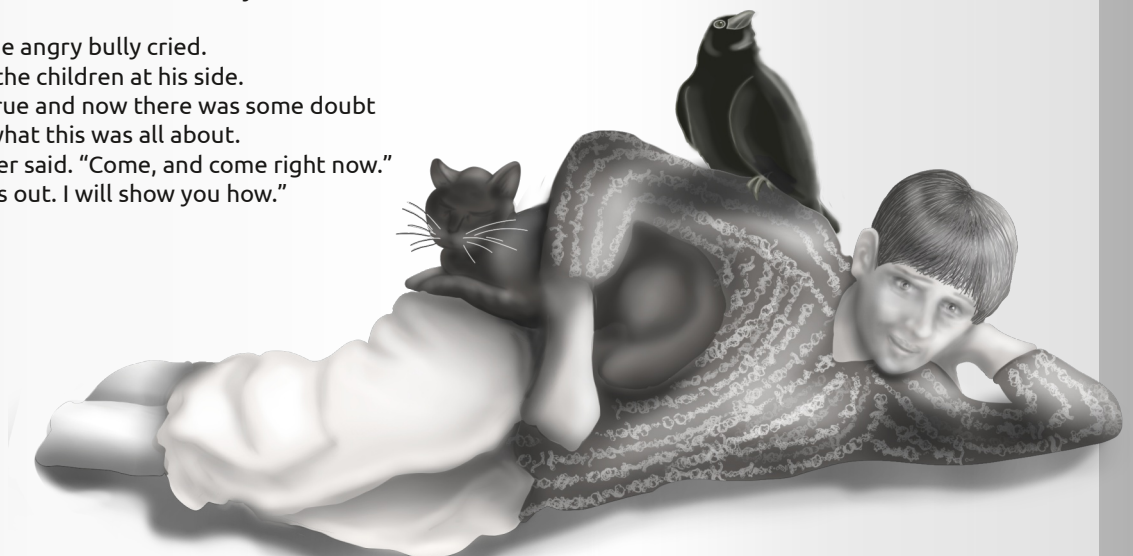
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Knowing them can help us each become a better sleuth.
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"How to question" is a formal lesson in his school.
Now these students check their facts, avoiding mental fog.
They learned how to seek the truth,
because of Danny's-Dog.



Logical Fallacies

What they are and how to spot them



Beverly Pearl

is a Canadian
author, artist
and educator.

Danny finds an abandoned baby crow and takes care of it. The crow, now attached to Danny, follows him to school every day. The other students jokingly refer to the crow as "Danny's Dog". Logical Fallacies begin to unfold when a bully pushes Danny down. Through a variety of logically fallacious exchanges, Danny is blamed and punished for starting the fight. During a second encounter with the bully, "Danny's Dog" catches the attention of a teacher with his loud cawing, in time for her to see the lie unfold. This teacher decides to teach the children about what logical fallacies are and how to spot them.

The story is presented as a poem that shares the experiences of the fictional Grove St. School children as they learn about logical fallacies. Illustrations include speech bubbles representing some of the fallacies as they may manifest among school children.



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